## SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

LANSING, MICHIGAN

For Immediate Release Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) April 22, 2005 517/373-2406

## "Five Lakes, Two Peninsulas, One Michigan"

Senate Democrats Launch Environmental Agenda

LANSING- Michigan Senate Democrats announced today that they will be taking their environmental message, entitled, "Five Lakes, Two Peninsulas, One Michigan" on the road in a series of town halls intended to bring public attention to Michigan's threatened natural resources. Senator Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) was joined at the Earth Day announcement by many of the state's environmental leaders who urged legislative action on several important environmental matters.

"Our town hall meetings are intended to empower the public and bring attention to the threats and limits of our natural resources," said Sen. Liz Brater. "We must be proactive and protect our resources for our citizens, farms, and businesses."

Several of the state's major environmental groups- among them the Michigan Environmental Council, League of Conservation Voters, Clean Water Action, and PIRGIM- were on hand to announce their participation in the town halls and to urge action on issues impacting our natural resources and land conservation.

"Water is becoming increasingly valuable as other states attempt to divert our resources," said Brater. "Senate Democrats are committed to protecting and managing our water resources for our families and for generations to come."

Senator Brater and Sen. Mickey Switalski (D-Roseville) are proposing legislation to protect Michigan's lakes and beaches from combined sewer overflows. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing rolling back federal standards to allow sewage overflows into our lakes. The Democrats will be introducing legislation here in Michigan to prevent sewage from entering our lakes and closing our beaches.

"We must not allow untreated sewage to enter our lakes and close our beaches," said Sen. Switalski.

"The citizens of Michigan care too much about our environment to allow sewage to be dumped into our state's lakes and streams," said Sen. Brater. "The EPA proposal is as much a threat to public health as to the environment."

Sen. Brater and Sen. Ray Basham (D-Taylor) are also introducing Senate Concurrent Resolutions urging the United States Coast Guard to immediately eliminate the "No Ballast on Board" exemption from regulations on ballast water management. Brater wants to mitigate the invasive species threat by requiring that all ships with ballast entering the Great Lakes conform to existing federal ballast water regulations.

The regulatory loopholes that have allowed this steady stream of invasive species to continue must be stopped," said Brater. "We need to educate and engage the public if we ever expect the Coast Guard to deal seriously with this threat."

The first of the town halls is scheduled for May 18 in Washtenaw County. The Democrats will also hold events in St. Clair Shores, Saginaw, Muskegon, Grayling and the Upper Peninsula. Host Senators will be announcing more detailed event information.

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